



by Ned Hickson

## Stranger Danger Also Includes Komodo Dragons

As you've probably heard, the executive editor at the San Francisco Chronicle was attacked by a 7-foot-long Komodo dragon during a special behind-the-scenes tour at the Los Angeles Zoo. As a result, officials are now going to "re-evaluate" the special visiting privileges reserved for major donors.

(Without question, feeding yourself to a seven-foot lizard definitely falls into the "major donor" category.)

What does remain is the question of how zoo officials, who utilize these types of fund raising devices as a way to purchase

dental floss for their Komodo dragons, will find ways to attract major donors in the future. While there are certainly lots of other, safer animal exhibits that could be toured by big spenders, the danger factor and story-telling value drops off considerably once you leave man-eater realm.

Being at a dinner party and telling how you stared down a Siberian tiger, then narrowly escaped its claws, is definitely more impressive than recalling the time you held off a hungry Toucan with nothing but a tranquilizer gun and a box of Fruit Loops.

The same goes for tales of survival that have anything to do with ovulating ostriches or outrunning giant, spitting tortoises (even if what you were wearing was labeled dry clean only.)

The fact is, these stories

are a lot like microwavable pork rinds; lots of sizzle, very little pop.

It's a situation that has fund raising officials scrambling for new ways to reward their major contributors; the trick being to find an acceptable balance between offering donors danger without also offering them as dinner.

As you can imagine, brainstorming sessions have produced a number of ideas, all of which are top secret. However, through an inside source, I was able to obtain a list of titles for some possible "special visit" activities.

- Among them:
- One potato, two potato, three potato, roar!
  - Share your Big Mac with a razorback.
  - Can you find the piranha in the sauna?
  - Crouching tiger, hidden

exit.

- Jack is nimble, Jack is quick, but Jack is still asking for a much bigger stick.

The truth is, there's no need to waste time coming up with new ways to thrill big contributors. All officials need to do is take a closer look at the dangers an average attendee confronts during a routine excursion to the zoo.

Just consider how frightening it is to walk past the guy who bends and contorts balloons into animal shapes. It's like maneuvering past someone twisting multi-colored explosives together; one false move, and the chain reaction could blow the fur off a mountain yak.

Ever run out of food pellets while you're in the middle of the petting zoo? The only way out is to be air lifted, and then, only after

your hair and shoes have been eaten by goats.


I'd just as soon skip the details about the monkey house, but let me just say to any honeymooners out there that, if you walk by it at the wrong time, they won't be throwing rice.

Which gives me a thought: If zoos were to

stop providing special privileges to major donors, they could skip this monkey business in the first place.

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Pictured from Left to Right Front: Allison Lattimore, Shayla Lawson, Melanie Snyder, Amy Tilley, Amy Butler, Tonya Howard. Back row Left to Right: Lisa Cable, Ariana Ownbey, Dahlia Guinn, Stephanie Phillips.



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